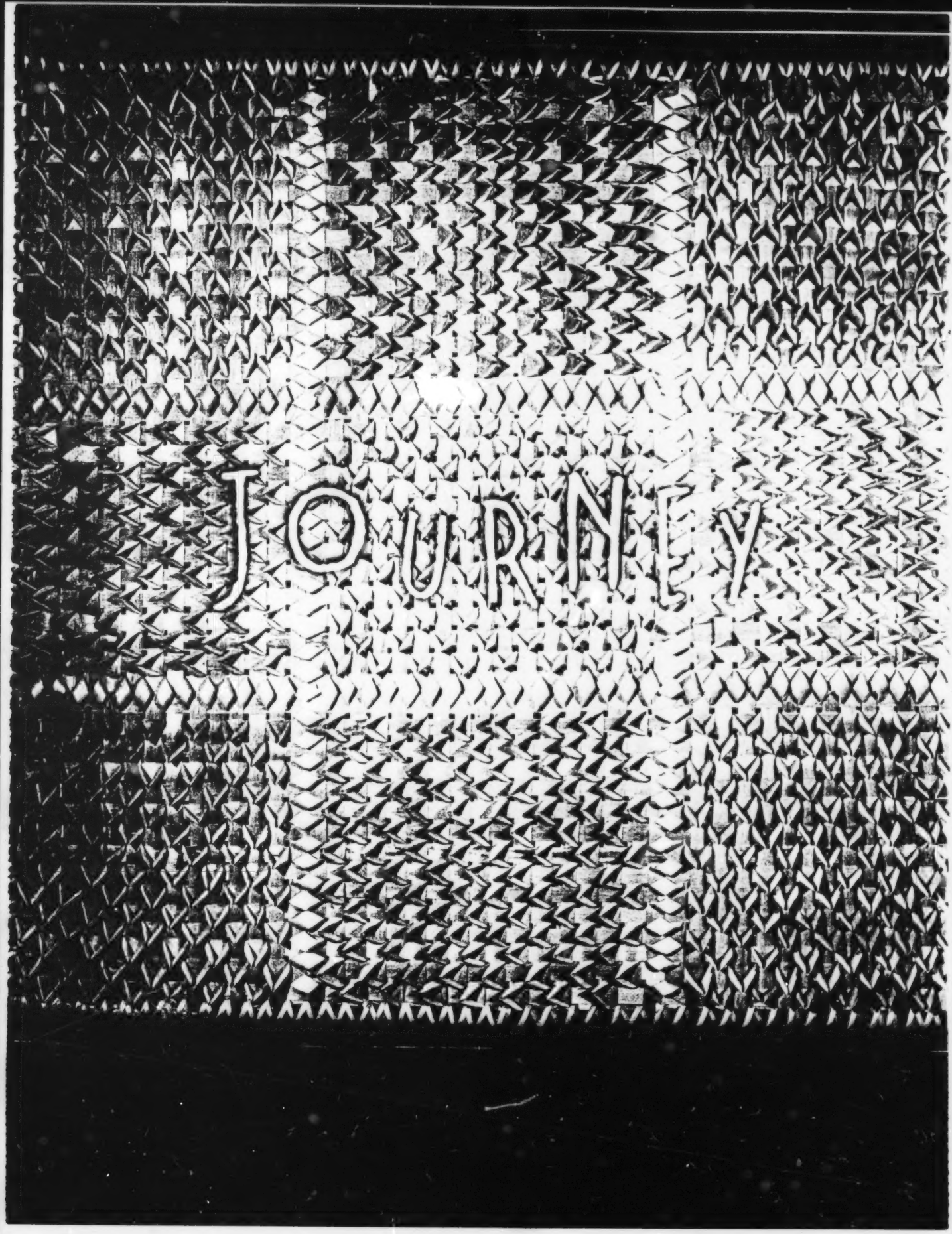
JOURNEY

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JOURNEY

Allen Angeconeb, *Man, Daughter, Son and Helpers*, 2000
serigraph on paper, 23.3 x 31.0 cm

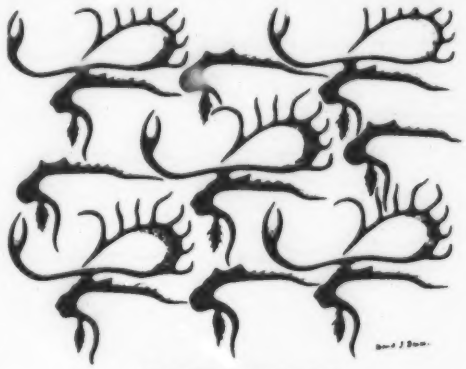
Journey is a summation of events to this point in time. With art there is voice. The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia's permanent collection of First Nations art evidences changes in attitude, knowledge, and understanding as society comes to terms with an art force that existed before contact and continues with the people who survived to create new and vibrant work. The permanent collection is still very young . We are just beginning to consider all the history involved with First Nations art and all the details involved with presenting historic and contemporary works of art. We are just starting the critical assessment and analysis of the art being created by artists of Native ancestry in the region. *Journey* is the first exhibition in the First Nations Gallery, there will be many more in the future. We begin this journey looking back to where we began by considering the first piece of First Nations art collected in 1979, *Totem Pole*, and then at recently collected pieces of Charles Doucette's *Untitled* sculptures or Roger Simon's *Woman With a Gun*, the distance covered in less than a quarter century is remarkable. Masterworks of Aboriginal art have always existed. Every Nation has had its masters, but for too long those who governed art collections and acquisitions in public galleries knew little about them. Anthropologists were the authorities on Aboriginal art, but their background and academic approach would only allow categorization of these items as artifacts rather than as works of art. For over twenty-five years contemporary First Nations artists have voiced these concerns across the country and today their struggle is effecting a change in attitudes. Recognition of a field of art that, until recently, was mostly ignored or stereotyped as simple, unimportant craft or as an imitation of European painting practice, has enabled today's First Nations artists to draw on their own art history to create meaningful works that define their own place within a global citizenry.

Jane Ash Poitras, *Pink Shamans*, 1996
244.0 x 186.7 cm, mixed media

I am grateful that the *Totem Pole* is a unique example of a misstep in the collecting practise of the AGNS before specific expertise was available. Ten years later the gallery would include more First Nations works into its permanent collection. *Four Profiles of Mother Earth* by Allen Angeconeb, collected in 1989, is a simplistic linear art piece that could almost be called minimalist in its look. One may not at first recognize the Eastern Woodlands[1] style involved in its creation, but upon close examination the profiles are similar, if more precise than what would normally be attributed to that style. It is a good example of this artist's early work and one of the small treasures we have within the gallery.

Embryo, by Norval Morrisseau, also collected 1989, is a work that remains prominent in the AGNS's First Nations art collection as Morrisseau is known as the father of the Woodlands School of painting. Although not a prime example of this artist's vast repertoire of masterworks it does demonstrate the liberal brush strokes of a painted background that the artist experimented with during the early to mid-seventies. Previous works are more apt to be a detailed subject painted upon a single light coloured painted or raw medium background.

Migration by David Brooks, was included in the permanent collection in 1990. *Migration* became the first piece of art work by a Mi'kmaq artist collected by the AGNS. Brooks had received much of his training from fellow Mi'kmaq artist Phillip Young. Influenced by the popular Eastern Woodland style of work, *Migration* is a work that confirms his interest in this style. With it's liquid lines and flowing design *Migration* is reminiscent of another principal Eastern Woodland school painter, Benjamin Chee Chee.



David Brooks, *Migration*, 1987
acrylic on paper, 73.5 x 50.9 cm

Brooks continued to work and master this style of painting before coming into his own. His most recent work has become filled with symbols of his own Mi'kmaq nationality and he is beginning to express a more personal social and political status, often referring to place and identity rather than legends and aesthetics.

Raven by Claude Davidson, father of renowned artist Robert Davidson, is a much better representation of West Coast[2] art than *Totem Pole*. Here we see the creation legend of Raven trying to coax the human beings from out of the clam shell. It is an interesting piece reminding me immediately of Bill Reid's

Raven and the First Men[3] depicting the same legend. Although somewhat unpolished in its appearance, the piece displays a wonderful human touch, distancing it from the slick West Coast art trade that is so evident in cities like Vancouver, Seattle or Prince Rupert.

Lance Belanger's *Untitled* piece was one of the major purchases made after the 1993 exhibition Pe'l A'tukwey. Belanger is a well rounded artist, one who has responded to art making with a modernist approach. He is one of the new generation of reconstructionist artists whose work cleverly uses

Charles Doucette, *untitled*, 1992
welded steel, gypsum, fused metal filings, 106.5 x 60.5 x 24.0 cm

European paraphernalia to express contemporary First Nations grievances regarding a vast range of issues. In this piece of glossy black enamel we can see the usage of computer circuit boards and a braid of sweetgrass arranged to form a butterfly, the metamorphic life of which symbolizes the balance between the spiritual and physical worlds of the Maliseet. By covering it all in shiny black enamel paint he emphasises the mystery of spiritual and physical relationships. Belanger continues to intrigue the viewer with yet another layer of meaning, that being the intercourse of technology and tradition. By using circuit boards and sweetgrass, Belanger opens up a narrative regarding the human experience. Like a wise shaman, he leaves us to our own conclusions regarding this discourse.

Charles Doucette is one of Nova Scotia's most promising artists. His post-modernist work often takes on contemporary issues effecting his community. Working in a wide range of media Doucette works primarily in sculpture. He is often changing the acceptable perspective of which to view work. His gypsum flag sculptures layer his views of Canada and the Mi'kmaq nation. In his flag representing Canada we are drawn immediately to the centre where instead of a single maple leaf, we have a pile of leaves that appear as if raked into the centre of an ice rink. The melting pot theory of Canada or the imposed assimilation of First Nations people is brought to mind here. The comment of many leaves may suggest the many nations that make up Canada. The sarcastic ice rink surface of the flag may refer to the 'common ground' that we as Canadians understand. Doucette may be commenting that being Canadian is much like being in a game of hockey. You get bumped and bruised and you fight to make the team, it is never a sure thing even if you are First Nations.

His piece depicting the Mi'kmaq flag is a more pensive look at the meaning of belonging to a nation. Here, the cross of the flag is raised above the surrounding ice, forming an island; it is painted in red ochre and engraved with petroglyph-like images. Upon the island there are trees, a single star, and the moon in a crescent shape reflect upon the ice on either side of the cross as they do on the original flag. The red colour, especially red ochre, is symbolically a colour to represent our life source, our blood, in this case, the life of the Mi'kmaq Nation. The petroglyph renderings refer to the Mi'kmaq presence on this land. The trees represent the proof of this abundant life force. The star shape, which some refer to as the sun, represents day and the moon represents the night sun, presenting the continuance of time eternal.

There are 15 First Nation artists represented in the AGNS permanent collection. I have selected six as relevant examples of this journey on which we all find ourselves. From Leonard Paul's realism to Jane Ash Poitras's post-moderism, every member of the collection has made a difference on how we perceive First Nations art, each has taken a step on the path toward a better understanding of each other. It is important to note that for *Journey* we have respectively included selected works from the History Section

Teresa Marshall, *A dress*, 2000
Steel, acrylic paint, 181.2 x 151.2 x 30.24cm
Collection of the Artist

Luke Simon, *Untitled*, 1992
oil on masonite, 122.0 x 152.5 cm

of the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History to confirm the recognition of past artists. There are artists such as Steve Relton, Teresa Marshall, and Alan Syliboy that have contributed new works to *Journey* adding to the scope of contemporary art creativity in Nova Scotia. When we look at the works of all these artists we can feel the magic of our ancestors, the power of creative impulse and workings of imagination and determination. Art remains a mystery, a source of power. The future has never looked more promising for our artists to practise their creativity, to draw on their history, to share that history with an enlightened, curious public, and to speak through their art. The journey continues.

Jim Logan
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Associate Curator, First Nations Art

[1] Eastern Woodlands Style refers to the art of the Great Lakes region of North America including such First Nations as Ojibway, Huron, Iroquois, Mohawk, Odawa, and others.

[2] West Coast art refers the art of the First Nations of the North American Pacific rim, including Oregon, Washington, British Columbia and the Alaskan Panhandle. Nations include Salish, Tlingit, Haida, Nootka, Tsimsian and others.

[3] *Raven and the First Men*, 1983, Bill Reid, Haida, University of British Columbia Museum of Anthropology
www.civilization.ca/cmc/reid/reid01be.html

List of Works

Artist Unknown

Totem Pole, c.1958
polychrome wood
96.0 x 35.2 x 22.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia,
Purchase, 1979

Allen Angeconeb
(b. 1955, Lac Seul, Hudson, Ont.)

Two Ptarmigans, 1982
serigraph on paper, 5/75
27.0 x 44.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Barbara Newman, Halifax, NS, 1997

Four Profiles of Mother Earth, 1984
etching on paper, 14/16
25.5 x 38.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Jim and Pat Lotz, Halifax, NS, in memory of the Hutcheons of Oldmeldrum, Aberdeenshire, 1984

Man Returns to Parents, 2000
linocut on paper
23.3 x 31.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Man and Guardians at Obishikokkang, 2000
linocut on paper
23.3 x 31.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Man and Boy Return to Obishikokkang, 2000
linocut on paper
23.3 x 31.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Man, Daughter, Son and Helpers, 2000
linocut on paper
23.3 x 31.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Lance Belanger
(b. 1956 Tobique NB)

Untitled, 1991
enamel and mixed media on board
91.5 x 183.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with funds provided by MTT, an Alient Company, Halifax, NS, 1993

David Brooks
(b. 1950 Truro NS)

Migration, 1987
acrylic on paper
48.0 x 56.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Statistics Canada, Halifax, NS 1990

Five Great Artists
wood burl
37.0 x 26.0 x 24.5cm
Collection of Carrefour Atlantic
Emporium, Halifax, NS

Untitled
wood burl
22.8 x 13.5 x 17cm
Collection of Carrefour Atlantic
Emporium, Halifax, NS

Tribute to Post Artists
181.4cm x 120.9cm
acrylic on canvas
Collection of Carrefour Atlantic
Emporium, Halifax, NS

Arlene Christmas, 'Dozay'
(b.1954, Tobique NB)

Glooscap's Return, 2000
oil on canvas
64.5 x 59.5 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Glooscap's Canoe - Bird Island, 2000
oil on canvas
69.5 x 85.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Claude Davidson
(b. 1924 Waton River Cannery, BC)

Raven 1982
argillite
6.0 x 17.0 x 6.5 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Margaret Kontak, Halifax, NS, 1992

Charles Doucette
(b.1962, Sydney, NS)

Untitled, 2000
gypsum crystal, gypsum, metal and paint on drywall on wood
60.4 x 120.9 x 5.8 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

Untitled, 2000
gypsum, metal, paint on drywall on wood
60.4 x 120.9 x 5.8 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts
Acquisition Assistance Program and
the Art Sales and Rental Society, 2000

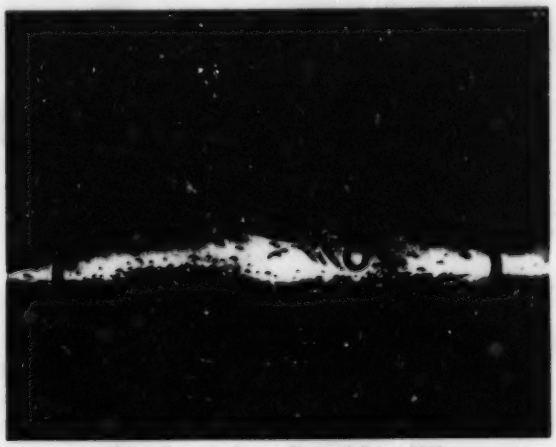
Alex Janvier
(b. 1935 Le Goff Reserve AB)

Blood Tears, 2001
acrylic on linen
145.5 x 193cm
Collection of the Artist, Cold Lake, AB

Margaret Johnson
(b.1915, Chapel Island NS)

Untitled 1979
silk, beads and cotton
86.5 x 175.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Dianne O'Neill, Halifax, NS 1998

Wisqoqe'k jikijijk, 1997
sweetgrass, black ash splints and steel
127.0 x 127.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with funds provided by the Art Sales and Rental Society, Halifax NS, 1997



Arlene Christmas, 'Dozay', *Glooscap's Return*, 2000
oil on canvas, 64.5 x 59.5 cm

JOURNEY
30 Sept, 2001 - Sept 29, 2002
First Nations Gallery (34)
Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

Curator: Jim Logan, Associate Curator - First Nations Art

Printed in Canada
© 2001 Art Gallery of Nova Scotia

ISBN 0-88871-700-8
Published by
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
PO Box 2262
1723 Hollis Street
Halifax, Nova Scotia B3J 3C8
www.agns.gov.ns.ca

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Photography: Jim Logan, unless otherwise noted
Design: Semaphor Design
Photoengraving: Maritime Digital
Printing: BroMoc Print

The exhibition was made possible with support received from, HRM Millennium Committee and ExxonMobil Canada

ExxonMobil

Director's Foreword

This is a very special celebration for the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia - the establishment of a First Nations Gallery. The First Nations Gallery will provide a focus for the AGNS collection of aboriginal art and local and other collections to showcase this important aspect of our cultural heritage.

Since the early 1990s, the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia has been striving to acknowledge the important artistic heritage of our First Nations artists, both historical and contemporary. There have been many developments at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia in the recognition of contemporary First Nations art. The AGNS hosted, in 1990, the exhibition **In the Shadow of the Sun** organized and toured by the Canadian Museum of Civilization and the University of Wurtzburg, Germany. The 1993 AGNS exhibition **Pe'l A'tukwey: let me...tell a story,** with curators Dr. Mora Dianne O'Neill and Viviane Gray, provided an important assessment and critical analysis of the art being created by artists of native ancestry in this region. The Art Gallery of Nova Scotia is committed to the preservation of our First Nations artistic heritage and in providing the opportunity to nurture a great appreciation of aboriginal art and its impact on everyday life. Exhibitions which included First Nations art followed - **Responses, Industrial Strength, At the Great Harbour: 250 Years on the Halifax Waterfront, MIRRORED** and **re-claiming history.**

In 1999, we were very fortunate in receiving support from The Canada Council for the Arts who made it possible to have Jim Logan on staff for two years as our First Nations Curatorial Resident. We are now very pleased to welcome Jim Logan as the Associate Curator of First Nations Art at the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia. The first exhibition chosen by the Associate Curator, entitled Journey shows the programming and development of the AGNS collection in arriving at this special time. While the Gallery has formally dedicated this space to First Nations art, other specific galleries through the AGNS may also feature First Nations art.

I want to acknowledge the special guidance and support provided by Dr. Peter Christmas, Executive Director of the Mi'kmaq Association for Cultural Studies and member of the AGNS Board of Governors. Dr. Christmas' commitment to the goal of establishing a First Nations gallery was unwavering as was the support of Dr. Mora Dianne O'Neill, from the early 1990s to the present time.
I wish to express my thanks to Grand Chief Ben Syliboy, Don Julien, Director of the Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq, and the Tripartite Forum Culture and Heritage Working Committee, for their valuable support.

We are grateful to the artists, private collectors, and the Nova Scotia Museum of Natural History who have kindly loaned works to this inaugural exhibition.

The First Nations Gallery would not have been possible without the financial support of the HRM Millennium Committee, chaired by Mr. Jack Keith. The vision and insight of Mr. Keith and the Committee in establishing this important legacy is gratefully acknowledged.
ExxonMobil Canada has had a very special relationship with the AGNS and in supporting First Nations art. Recently, they were the presenting sponsor for **Homeboys: Alex Janvier and Alan Syliboy,** curated by Jim Logan. Now, their generosity is extended to the endowment of this Gallery. We are grateful to Jeff Woodbury, President of ExxonMobil Canada, and everyone at ExxonMobil Canada. Congratulations to all the First Nations artists included in the AGNS collection and the exhibition.

The AGNS acknowledges with gratitude the support of The Canada Council for the Arts, the Art Sales and Rental Society, and the many donors who have contributed to the growth of this important part of our collection.

Now, with a specific Gallery dedicated to First Nations art, we are honored to be able to develop and create a greater understanding of the diverse and rich artistic cultures in Nova Scotia and Canada.

Bernard Riordon
Director

Cover image:
Margaret Johnson,
Wisqoqe'k jikijijk, 1997
sweetgrass, black ash splints and steel,
127.0 x 127.0 cm

Francis Kagige
(b.unknown)

Untitled, n.d.
acrylic on canvas board
56.0 x 71.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of John deWitt, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Teresa Marshall
(b.1962 Truro NS)

Shoes
tobacco maché over shoes
7.5 X 22.5 x 20.5cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

A dress, 2000
Steel, acrylic paint
181.2 x 151.2 x 30.24cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

A dress, 2000
wood, metal, mixed media
25.0 x 241.9cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

Norval Morrisseau
(b.1931 Fort William, Ont.)

Embryo, c.1975
acrylic on board
106.5 x 61.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of John deWitt, Halifax, NS, 1984

Daphne Odjig
(b. 1919, Wakwemikong, Ont)

Visionaries, 1990
graphite on paper
10.0 x 10.0 cm
Collection of Jim Logan, Earltown NS

Ancestral Memory, 1990
graphite on paper
10.0 x 10.0 cm
Collection of Jim Logan, Earltown NS

Jane Ash Poitras

Pink Shamans, 1936
mixed media
244.0 x 186.7 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with the financial support of The Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program and the Art Sales and Rental Society, 1997

Steve Relton
(b. 1964 Chatham Ont.)

Quill Basket, 2001
birch bark, porcupine quills, natural and commercial dyes
12.5 x 10.0 cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

Quill Basket, 2001
birch bark, porcupine quills, natural and commercial dyes
12.5 x 10.0 cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

Luke Simon
(b.1953, Big Cove, NB)

Untitled, 1992
oil on masonite
122.0 x 152.5 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with funds provided by the Art Sales and Rental Society , Halifax , NS, 1995

Roger Simon
(b.1954-2000, Big Cove, NB.)

Woman with a Gun, 1992
oil on paper
50.5 x 40.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Purchased with funds provided by the Art Sales and Rental Society, Halifax, NS, 1995

Alex Janvier, *Blood Tears*
acrylic on linen, 145.5 cm x 193cm
Collection of the Artist

Alan Syliboy
(b.1952 Millbrook, NS)

Tufts Cove Survivor, 1999
mixed media on illustration board
76.0 x 101.5 cm
Purchased with support of
The Canada Council for the Arts Acquisition Assistance Program and the AGNS Gallery Shop, 1999

Untitled, 2001
acrylic on canvas
70.0 x 127 cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

Untitled, 2001
acrylic on canvas
151.2 x 122cm
Collection of the Artist, Millbrook, NS

Lawrence Paul Yuxwelupton
(b.1956, Kamloops, BC)

Clear Cut to the Last Tree, 1993
serigraph on paper, 58/98
76.5 x 56.0 cm
Collection of
the Art Gallery of Nova Scotia
Gift of Jack Adelaar in memory of Emmanuel Adelaar, West Vancouver, BC,1998

Ruby Williams
(b. Circa 1885 - Unkown)
Magdalene Thomas Williams
(B. 1845 - 1930)

Four Quill Boxes
birch bark, porcupine quills, spruce root, wood, sweetgrass
22.0 x 12.0 x 14.0 cm,
17.0 x 10.0 x 10.0cm,
12.0 x 7.0 x 6.0, 5.0 X 50 X 9.5 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum, History Sectiom

Unknown

Quill Purse
birch bark, porcupine quills, wood, fibre
16.0 x 7.0 x 17.0 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum, History Sectiom

Unknown

Box
birch bark, wood, spruce root
24.5 x 25 x 45 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum, History Sectiom

Martha Wilmot
(b. Unknown)

Basket
ash wood, sweetgrass
10.8 x 22.0 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum, History Sectiom

Noel Smith and Rita Smith
(b. Unknown)

Basket
ash wood
25.1 x 34.0 cm
Collection of the Nova Scotia Museum, History Sectiom

Art Gallery *of* Nova Scotia

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